1:Gallin E-4,5 (1957-1958) 1966
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knew she would eventually go blind, "by that time my children will be grown and able to take care of me." In the interim she would not take the time nor spend the money to obtain treatment.

There are several reasons for the high rate of intestinal and parasitic diseases. Although the villagers are aware that water should be boiled before drinking, they actually merely heat it. At the same time they court danger by buying drinks from sidewalk vendors in town. Facilities for washing dishes and other utensils are limited; much of it is done in the nearby pond which serves as the laundry and a bathing place for buffalo as well. Intestinal diseases are also caused by eating raw vegetables which were fertilized with human excrement.

These disorders common in the village do not usually cause alarm. When a familiar illness strikes, the patient may be given some patent or herbal medicine and the illness allowed to run its course. Childhood diseases are common and produce little anxiety. However, there is a fear of diseases whose origin is poorly understood, which produce curious symptoms, and for which no cures are known. When one of these illnesses strikes, a Western-style doctor is called in to administer penicillin or some other drug. The general feeling is that Western medicines, if they are appropriate for the illness, effect fast cures. While many villagers insist that Chinese medicines are just as effective if not more so in the long run, in that they produce a more permanent cure, they readily admit that Chinese medicines are slower to work than Western ones. If the Western medicines fail to help and the patient does not seem to recover quickly enough, or if the illness is very unusual, the villagers conclude that the disorder is caused by some supernatural agent and must be dealt with by magical means. (A detailed discussion of supernatural explanations for illness and the remedies used to cure them is found in Chapter 8.) Most of the diseases prevalent locally are not fatal, and old age seems to be the main cause of death in the Hsin Hsing area.

DEATH, BURIAL, AND MOURNING

The villagers' attitude toward the rituals and ceremonials associated with death vary for the most part with the age and status of the deceased and the economic condition of the family. An old person is almost always given an elaborate, very expensive funeral which entails lengthy mourning rituals. This is also true for a younger adult who leaves children and therefore has status in the community. Young people and children are given a rather simple funeral unless the family is financially well-off. A funeral ceremony is very rarely held for an infant or child under a year old.

The villagers believe that the individual has three spirits. At death

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• 75 Often the cause of the illness is not so easily discernible nor is its cure effected so simply. Even when a Western-style doctor is summoned, the anxiety of the patient's family may be so great that while the doctor is attempting to cure the illness, they may resort to supernatural techniques to discover its exact cause and necessary treatment. On occasion, a village family may either go to a fortune-teller in Lukang or consult one who happens to pass through at the time to learn the cause of the trouble. More frequently, however, they call in a *t'iao t'ung* to communicate directly with a god to learn what kind of supernatural being is involved and exactly how it may be successfully appeased or exorcised.

755 The *t'iao t'ung* goes to the family's ancestral-worship room and
756 there sits among the people who, out of interest in the session or concern for the sick person, have gathered to observe the ritual. As those around him sit and talk, the *t'iao t'ung* stares into space; gradually, his hands, feet, and body start to shake. Usually, in fifteen minutes he is in a trance and possessed by the god. At this point he becomes extremely agitated and starts to scream and chant. He springs high into the air and blindly staggers around the room. One or two men hold a special cloth apron he wears in order to prevent him from injuring himself or those around him while he is convulsed. Within minutes his paroxysm subsides, and he is brought to the altar where he begins to chant in the language of the gods. An assistant (a *fa shih*), sits at a table in front of the altar and asks the pertinent questions in the special language. Through the medium of the *t'iao t'ung*, the god gives his answers. These are recorded by the assistant, who in some cases is known to be illiterate. The assistant writes certain characters with a brush and ink on a special paper. Once the god's words have been recorded he is presumed to depart, and the *t'iao t'ung* comes out of his trance. He usually is wet with perspiration and sometimes bears injuries incurred while he was convulsed.

In some cases of illness, the instructions the god gives to effect a cure can be carried out immmediately by the family itself. The god tells the cause of the ailment and gives directions for the appeasement of the spirits, e.g., the family must burn a specific amount of paper money as an offering for them. In addition, the family may be directed to feed the patient some herbal medicine prescribed by the god to eliminate the fever caused by the presence of the demon.

[789] In some cases of illness, however, the god will inform the people that a cure can be effected only if the demon is not only appeased but also exorcised. In such an instance, it is necessary to call in a *fa shih* who has powerful means at his disposal to accomplish this feat, such as charms, a sword, and a whip with a handle shaped like a snake (symbolizing a mythical white snake which helps the gods fight the demons). In addition, the *fa shih* may make an agreement with the